

Message Text

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SUBJECT: ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION: MEMCON: INDRO MONTANELLI,
EDITOR, IL GIORNALE, AND CONGEN MILAN. JULY 31, 1975.

1. (MONTANELLI IS ITALY'S MOST FAMOUS JOURNALIST, A LIBERAL ANTI-FASCIST, ANTI COMMUNIST WHO BROKE WITH THE CORRIERE DELLA SERA TO ESTABLISH IL GIORNALE LAST YEAR WITH FINANCING FROM MONTEDISON'S CEFIS - WHO IS ALSO FINANCING THE CORRIERE*)

2. MONTANELLI WAS DEEPLY DISCOURAGED BY THE NATIONAL POLITICAL SITUATION. HE SAW A STEADILY DETERIORATING SITUATION WHICH COULD LEAD TO A COMMUNIST STALINIST REGIME.

3. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, HE ARGUED, WERE LEADERLESS. IT WAS A PART THAT NEVER UNDERSTOOD DEMOCRACY AND, AFTER DE GASPERI WHO DID, SIMPLY BECAME A PARASITE ON THE BODY POLITIC. FANFANI AT LEAST HAD THE MERIT OF HAVING GUTS. THE OTHERS DON'T EVEN HAVE THAT.

4. HIS OWN PREFERENCE WAS FOR THE LAY PARTIES - THE REPUBLICANS, SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND LIBERALS. BUT THEY HAD ALSO PROVEN THEIR BANKRUPTCY. THERE WAS NO LEADERSHIP AND, AS A RESULT, NO FOLLOWERSHIP EITHER.

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5. AS FOR THE FAR RIGHT, IT WAS IMPOTENT. THERE WAS NO CAPABILITY FOR A COUP EVEN IF ONE WANTED TO TRY. THE ARMED FORCES WERE SHOT THROUGH WITH COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS. THAT LEFT THE CARABINIERI WHO WERE LOYAL. BUT THAT WAS 80,000 MEN - AND HE DISMISSED THAT ALTERNATIVE.

6. THE SOCIALISTS? THEY, SNORTED MONTANELLI, ARE TERRIFIED YET INCAPABLE OF RESISTING SELF DESTRUCTION BY ALLYING WITH THE COMMUNISTS. THE LEADERS KNOW THE DANGER THAT THEY WILL BE DEVoured. BUT THEY SEE NO OTHER CHOICE. AND THEY ARE DRIVEN BY THEIR OWN EXTREMIST RANK AND FILE WHICH DESPISES THE DEMOCRATIC STATE.

7. HE PLANNED TO TALK WITH PSI LEADER MANCINI. HE WAS A ROBBER. BUT HE WAS ALSO A GENUINE IN-FIGHTER WHO WAS NOT AFRAID TO KNIFE HIS ENEMIES. THAT WAS SOMETHING. MONTANELLI WOULD OFFER HIM IL GIORNALE'S SUPPORT AND BRING SOME SEGMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC, MIDDLE CLASS, LAY WORLD TO THE PSI IF IT WOULD STAND UP TO THE COMMUNISTS. IMAGINE OUR DESPERATION, HE SIGHED. EVEN A SOARES WOULD BE AN IMPROVEMENT*

8. THE COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP - THE BERLINGUERS AND AMENDOLAS - WERE SINCERE IN WANTING TO AVOID SOVIET COMMUNISM IN ITALY, HE CONTINUED. AFTERALL, THEY WOULD BE ITS FIRST VICTIMS AND KNEW THAT. BUT ONCE IN POWER, THEY WOULD BE HELPLESS. FIRST BECAUSE THEIR OPPOSITION WOULD VANISH. THERE WOULD BE A MASS CONVERSION TO COMMUNISM AS THERE HAD BEEN TO FASCISM. BERLINGUER WOULD NO LONGER BE ABLE TO TELL MOSCOW AND HIS OWN EXTREMISTS THAT HE HAD TO RESPECT DEMOCRATIC RULES BECAUSE OF THE OPPOSITION. THERE WOULD BE NO OPPOSITION LEFT* SECOND, THE ECONOMIC CRISIS WOULD DEEPEN AS CAPITAL FLIGHT ACCELERATES. ANYONE IN HIS RIGHT MIND WAS GETTING OUT WHAT HE COULD NOW. FACED WITH TRADE UNION DEMANDS FOR JOBS, FOR PAY AND FOR POWER, WHAT COMMUNIST LEADER WOULD BE ABLE TO RULE DEMOCRATICALLY? AND BERLINGUER WOULD BE FACED WITH THE WORK OF THE SECRET SOVIET CADRES IN THE PARTY AND TRADE UNIONS AS WELL.

9. ITALY'S INDUSTRIALISTS WOULD DO NOTHING. THE OWNERS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE FIRMS DIDN'T KNOW OR CARE ABOUT POLITICS. THE BIG ONES WERE UNLIKELY TO RISK THEIR NECKS. AGNELLI WON'T SINK IF ITALIAN DEMOCRACY SINKS. HIS EMPIRE IS WORLD WIDE.

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10. MONTECATINI EDISON'S EUGENIO CEFII WAS A SPECIAL CASE FOR MONTANELLI. INDIRECTLY, HE BANK-ROLLS BOTH IL GIORNALE AND THE CORRIERE DELLA SERA ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED POSITIONS. HE CANNOT OR WON'T TRY TO STOP THE CORRIERE FROM BACKING THE COMPROMESSO STORICO. BUT MONTANELLI HAD JUST BEEN WARNED BY HIS GO-BETWEENS WITH CEFIS THAT HE MAY BE ABOUT TO DITCH IL GIORNALE. IF CEFIS PULLS OUT, MONTANELLI SAID, WE ARE

FINISHED - DEAD.

1. IN ALL OF THIS, MONTANELLI CONTINUED, THE UNITED STATES HAS AN INTEREST. ITALY IS A POOR ALLY IN NATO. BUT, THE UNITED STATES IS BETTER OFF WITH ITALY AS AN ALLY THAN AS A MEMBER OF THE WARSAW PACT* NOT THAT ITALY COUNTS, HE SAID. BUT, IF ITALYS GOES, FRANCE FOLLOWS AND YOU CAN IMAGINE THE REST.

12. THE SAD FACT, MONTANELLI INSISTED, IS THAT THOSE IN ITALY OPPOSED TO A COMMUNIST VICTORY HAVE THE SENSATION THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS ABANDONED THEM. THEY MAY BE WRONG. BUT, HE WENT ON, IT SEEMS TO US THAT THE UNITED STATES IS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT A BARGAIN WITH THE SOVIETS THAN WITH KEEPING ITS ALLIES.

13. MONTANELLI WOULD NOT BE CONVINCED TO THE CONTRARY. LOOK, HE REPLIED TO REBUTTAL, WHETHER IT IS BECAUSE AMERICA IS MORE CONCERNED WITH THE SOVIET UNION, OR WITH WATERGATE OR BECAUSE THE CONGRESS WANTS TO DESTROY CIA, WE NEVERTHELESS HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT AT THIS CRUCIAL MOMENT, AMERICA DOESN'T REALLY CARE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS HERE. LOOK AT THE ATTITUDE OF THE AMERICAN PRESS, HE ARGUED. IT IS A GOOD REFLECTION OF AMERICAN RESIGNATION TO THE DEFEAT OF ITALY

-
IAN DEMOCRACY. AND THAT ACCELERATES THE UNRAVELLING OF THE NON-COMMUNIST FORCES.

14. BUT AMERICAN RESIGNATION WOULD BE A TRAGIC ERROR. (HE INSISTED), THE GAME IS NOT LOST IN ITALY. THERE ARE OTHERS WHO ARE ALSO READY TO FIGHT TOOTH AND NAIL TO SAVE A PRO-WESTERN AND DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM. THEY NEED HELP NOW WHILE THERE IS TIME. AND THE COST OF HELPING NOW IS CHEAP COMPARED TO THE COST TO THE UNITED STATES IF ITALY GOES COMMUNIST.

15. AS FAR AS HE WAS CONCERNED, HE WOULD FIGHT THE COMMUNISTS
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UNTIL THEY PUT HIM BACK IN PRISON OR THREW HIM OUT. AND THAT WAS THE UNANIMIOUS POSITION OF HIS EDITORS. BUT YOU AMERICANS SHOULD MAKE NO MISTAKE. ITALY IS NOW ON A SLIPPERY SLOPE FROM WHICH IT CAN'T ESCAPE ALONE. FINA

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